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RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(D), B7(C)

E35

ACTION WHA-00

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 003944

NSC FOR CBARTON
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD
STATE PASS USAID FOR DCHA/OTI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/27/2014
TAGS: PGOV, PHUM, KDEM, VE
SUBJECT: ARREST WARRANTS FOR STRIKE LEADERS, TRAVEL LIMITS
ON APRIL 2002 FIGURES

Classified By: Mark Wells, Acting Political Counselor,
for Reasons 1.4(b).

Summary

1. (C) Venezuelan judges issued arrest warrants on December 23 for eight former state oil company executives accused of civil rebellion and other crimes for their role in the December 2002 - February 2003 national strike.

Separately, prosecutors obtained measures against 30 persons involved in the alleged coup of April 2002 to prevent their departure from Venezuela.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: MELVIN E SINN
DATE/CASE ID: 24 JUN 2005 200404746

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End summary.

Former PDVSA Chiefs Accused of Civil Rebellion

2. (U) Venezuelan prosecutors obtained arrest warrants on December 23 for eight former executives of state oil company Petroleos de Venezuela, (PDVSA) for their role in the national strike of December 2002 - February 2003.

The charges include civil rebellion, incitement to commit a crime, improper interruption of supply of gasoline, and computer-related espionage. Civil rebellion is the most serious charge, carrying a 20-year prison term.

Though the strike leaders had been charged in February 2003 after the strike ended, an appeals court ruled that prosecutors had not followed proper procedures and ordered prosecutors to start from scratch. Prosecutors opened a new case in July 2004 against

were opened thereafter, though prosecutors did not formally open new cases against the remaining five.

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Chavez: Justice Restored

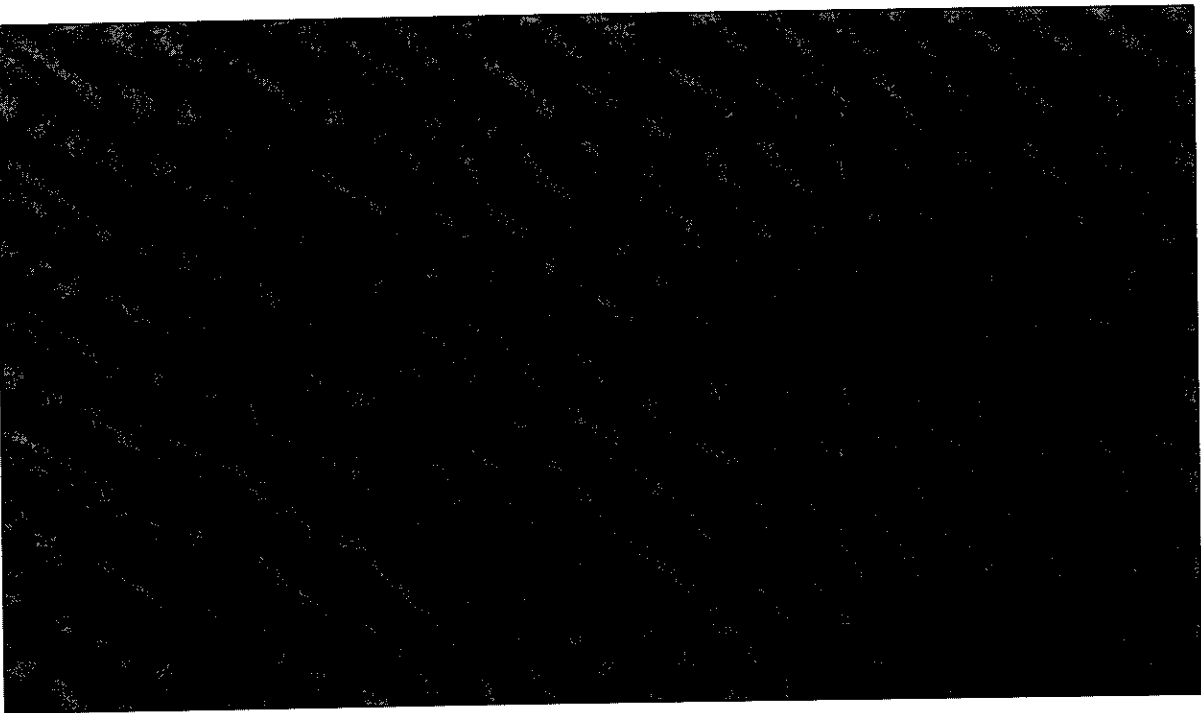
5. (U) During his state visit to China on December 23, President Hugo Chavez called the arrest warrants "the resurrection of justice in Venezuela." He recalled that during the strike Venezuela was "on the border of economic and political collapse" and that the strikers "sabotaged refineries and even killed people." He said Venezuelans lived in anguish because they could not get gasoline during the strike. Chavez said the country is looking forward, but added that justice cannot forget the past.

Travel Restrictions Placed on Carmona Signers

6. (C) Prosecutors investigating the events of April 2002 obtained court orders on December 18 preventing the 30 people under investigation for complicity in that case from leaving Venezuela. Prosecutors, who are picking up the case from murdered prosecutor Danilo Anderson, told the judge the 30 people were flight risks. Among those prohibited from leaving the country are

Some 400 people are under suspicion for their presence in Miraflores Palace on April 12, when then Fedecamaras President Pedro Carmona swore himself in as interim President of Venezuela during Chavez's temporary absence. The travel restrictions were applied to the 30 persons for whom formal investigations had already begun.

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8. (U) On December 18, a judge in Anzoategui State issued a travel prohibition against former opposition governor David De Lima for damaging the governor's mansion and embezzling furniture. The wife of MVR Governor Tarek William Saab accused De Lima of negligence in upkeep of the house and of illegally removing some furniture. Saab reportedly had to spend US\$180,000 to renovate the house. De Lima, who did not live in the mansion during his administration, denied the charges and vowed to remain in Venezuela to defend himself.

Comment



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